MARVEL

3

DeMATTEIS · NAUCK · ROSENBERG

MAGNETO

MAX EISENHARDT. ERIK LEHNSHERR. By any name—is he a victim or a villain? A freedom fighter or a terrorist? A trusted mentor or an evil mutant? The only fact that isn't up for debate is that he's the MASTER OF MAGNETISM known as...

MAGNETO

EVIL MUTANT

CHAPTER THREE: THE CAGE!

Editor's Note: This story takes place circa **NEW MUTANTS (VOL. 1) #38.**

Former "Evil Mutant" Magneto has taken over as headmaster of the Xavier School for Gifted Youngsters. The New Mutants he's charged with have been faced with a conundrum--can they fully trust their new leader, given his years of antagonizing humankind and the X-Men?

Magneto himself struggles with that past, though he recalls those early conflicts differently, his actions emboldened by his desire to serve as a lightning rod of anti-mutant sentiment and not purely evil intentions.

But now the powerful Irae, Queen of Wrath, has kidnapped Magneto. Wearing a costume inspired by Magneto's own original, her connection runs deeper—she is Magneto's...**daughter?!**

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"I WAS TWELVE YEARS OLD WHEN THE WORLD ENDED.

"IT BEGAN WITH RIPPLES OF FEAR SPREADING, LIKE A PLAGUE, THROUGHOUT THE CAPITAL CITY OF MY NATIVE COUNTRY, *SANTO MARCO.*

"ALL AROUND ME, PEOPLE WERE RUNNING, WEEPING, SCREAMING.

"PRAYING FOR DELIVERANCE.

"BUT DELIVERANCE FROM *WHAT?*

"WHAT *NIGHTMARE* HAD DESCENDED UPON US?

"WHAT *MONSTER--*

"--STRODE THROUGH OUR STREETS?

"I GAZED UP TO SEE A MAN HOVERING OVERHEAD. A MAN? NO. HE WAS A ***GOD.*** OR PERHAPS--

"--A ***DEVIL,*** SPIT UP FROM THE BOWELS OF HELL.

"EVEN WITH THE HELMET OBSCURING YOUR FACE, I COULD SEE YOUR EYES, SO BRIGHT WITH ARROGANCE AND RAGE. YOU ***TERRIFIED*** ME.

"AND YET, IN A WAY I COULDN'T EXPLAIN, THE VERY ***SIGHT*** OF YOU--

MAGNETO
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"--GAVE ME *HOPE.*

"YOUR NAME, I SOON DISCOVERED, WAS *MAGNETO.* A RENEGADE MUTANT WHO LOATHED HUMANITY.

"WHOSE SO-CALLED *BROTHERHOOD OF EVIL MUTANTS* SOUGHT TO WIPE *HOMO SAPIENS*--

"--FROM THE *FACE OF THE EARTH.*

"I FOUND OUT LATER THAT THE ARMY AT YOUR BACK WAS AN *ILLUSION,* CREATED BY ONE OF YOUR FOLLOWERS.

"NOT THAT THE GREAT MAGNETO *NEEDED* ILLUSIONS. NO--

"--YOU WERE AN *ARMY UNTO YOURSELF.*

"AND WHEN OUR MILITARY WAS FOOLISH ENOUGH TO LAUNCH A *COUNTER-* ATTACK--

"--THE INHABITANTS OF *SANTO MARCO CITY* LEARNED, TO THEIR EVERLASTING REGRET--

"--JUST *HOW POWERFUL* YOU WERE.

"I'M NOT SURE HOW LONG I WAS UNCONSCIOUS, BUT IT MUST HAVE BEEN HOURS. AND WHEN I CAME TO--

"--I WAS IN A *NEW WORLD.*

"THE INVASION WAS OVER, THE CITY IN SHAMBLES, THE BROTHERHOOD TRIUMPHANT.

"IN SHOCK-- MIND BLANK, BODY NUMB-- I WANDERED THE STREETS, AVOIDING YOUR SOLDIERS (REAL ONES THIS TIME. OUR ARMY HAD SURRENDERED, SUBMITTING TO YOUR WILL)--

"--JUMPING AT EVERY SHADOW--

"--AS I MADE MY WAY *HOME.*

"BUT SOMETHING WAS DIFFERENT: NOT JUST IN THE LANDSCAPE *AROUND* ME--

"--BUT IN THE LANDSCAPE *WITHIN.*

<I'M *HOME!?* *

"I FELT A STRANGE ENERGY, LIKE AN ELECTRICAL CURRENT, VIBRATING THROUGH MY BONES, MY BLOOD, MY VERY CELLS.

*TRANSLATED FROM SPANISH.

"AS IF I WAS DYING AND BEING REBORN--

ELENA--

<--WHERE HAVE YOU *BEEN?>*

"--AT THE *SAME TIME.*

<DON'T YOU REMEMBER? YOU SENT ME OUT TO GET-->

<NONE OF YOUR DAMN *EXCUSES!>*

"MY FATHER WAS DRUNK AND ANGRY. *MURILO PEREZ* WAS *ALWAYS* DRUNK AND ANGRY.

<I...I *SAW* IT, PADRE! THE *INVASION!>*

<I WAS *THERE* WHEN-->

"MY MOTHER, *RAFAELA,* ON THE OTHER HAND--

<DON'T TALK BACK TO ME!>

<I *WASN'T* TALKING BACK! I J-JUST-->

"--WAS A COWERING LITTLE *MOUSE--*

"--WHO DID *NOTHING* TO PROTECT ME...OR HERSELF... FROM HIS RAGES.

<I SAID *SHUT UP!>*

"FROM THE *BEATINGS* THAT CAME WITH DEVASTATING REGULARITY.

"ON THE TELEVISION, YOU ADDRESSED THE NATION. I DIDN'T UNDERSTAND THE WORDS (MY ENGLISH WAS *LACKING* THEN)--BUT I DIDN'T NEED TO. BECAUSE I FELT THEM. FELT *YOU.*

"YOUR RIGHTEOUS FURY WAS LIKE A FUSE, BURNING IN MY SOUL: *AWAKENING* SOMETHING THAT HAD ALWAYS BEEN THERE--SLEEPING ON THE EDGES OF CONSCIOUSNESS, THE PERIPHERY OF AWARENESS. I SUDDENLY SAW THE *TRUTH*--

"--OF *WHO* I WAS.

"WHAT I WAS.

"AND THAT TRUTH--

"--SET ME FREE.

"FOR THE SECOND TIME THAT DAY, I WAS IN SHOCK.

"HAD I DONE THIS?

"DESTROYED MY HOME? MURDERED MY PARENTS?

"FOR A MOMENT, I FELT SHAME. HORROR. REGRET.

"BUT THAT WAS SOON REPLACED BY AN OVERWHELMING SENSE OF POWER.

"PURPOSE.

"DESTINY.

"SOMEHOW, *YOUR* RAGE HAD IGNITED MY *OWN*. *YOUR* MUTANT POWERS HAD TRIGGERED *MINE*.

"BUT, PERHAPS, YOU'D TRIGGERED THEM--

"--TOO SOON.

"I SPENT A *YEAR* IN A COMA. AND YET, AS I WAFTED THROUGH THE SHADOWS BETWEEN LIFE AND DEATH--

"--YOU WERE *THERE* WITH ME.

"IT WAS AS IF THE EVENT THAT AWAKENED MY MUTANT ABILITIES HAD CREATED A KIND OF *RESONANCE* BETWEEN US. A *PSYCHIC TUNNEL*, FROM MY CONSCIOUSNESS TO YOURS.

"AND WHEN I EMERGED FROM MY TWELVE-MONTH SLUMBER, I *UNDERSTOOD:*

"ALL THOSE YEARS, SUFFERING ABUSE AT MURILO'S HANDS, I'D *REPRESSED* MY RAGE.

"REPRESSED THE *VERY THING* THAT WAS THE *KEY* TO MY LIBERATION. BUT NOW--

"--I HAD THE POWER TO *CHANNEL* THAT INCANDESCENT ANGER, GIVE IT SHAPE AND SUBSTANCE--"

--AND *USE* IT AS A *WEAPON.*

BEFORE XAVIER'S *X-MEN* DROVE YOU OUT OF SANTO MARCO--YOU ATTEMPTED TO SET OFF A *NUCLEAR BOMB.*

THE WORLD THOUGHT YOU'D FAILED. THE WORLD WAS *WRONG.*

I WAS THAT BOMB.

IT TOOK ME *YEARS* TO MASTER MY ABILITIES. BUT YOU, MAGNETO, WERE MY INNER COMPANION. MY *TEACHER* AND *GUIDE.*

THEY CALLED YOU A MADMAN, A VILLAIN. BUT I KNEW YOU WERE A *SAVIOR*-- FIGHTING FOR A *HOLY CAUSE.*

PROTECTING OUR KIND FROM BRUTES LIKE MY FATHER--

--WHO OPPRESS AND ABUSE THE WEAK, THE HELPLESS, THE *DIFFERENT.*

DO YOU SEE NOW WHY I CALL *YOU* FATHER...?

WITHOUT EVEN *REALIZING* IT--

--YOU BIRTHED ME. TRANSFORMED A VICTIMIZED CHILD--

--INTO IRAE, QUEEN OF WRATH!

WHERE... WHERE ARE WE?

DON'T YOU RECOGNIZE THIS PLACE? IT'S ONE OF THE MANY HIDDEN BASES YOU BUILT AND ABANDONED YEARS AGO.

BUT BECAUSE OF OUR PSYCHIC LINK, I WAS ABLE TO LOCATE IT HERE ON THIS DESOLATE ISLAND IN THE INDIAN OCEAN--

--AND MAKE IT INTO A HOME FOR MY SISTERHOOD OF EVIL MUTANTS. WELL, NOT MUTANTS AT FIRST. THEY WERE HUMAN--

--LOST AND ABUSED AS I ONCE WAS. BUT I TOOK THESE GIRLS UNDER MY WING...USED YOUR TECHNOLOGY TO ROOT OUT THEIR WEAKNESSES--

--AND TRANSFORM THEM INTO NEO-MUTANTS-- LOYAL TO ME, THEIR QUEEN! AND TO YOU, THEIR BELOVED KING!

YOU... YOU'VE TURNED THEM INTO GROTESQUERIES! INHUMAN ABERRATIONS THAT--

KRAAAAAKK

I SAVED THEM!

WHY... WHY ARE YOU DOING THIS?

IF I AM...WHAT YOU THINK I AM... YOUR FATHER... THEN WHY--

BECAUSE YOU'VE LOST YOURSELF!

ABANDONED OUR CAUSE! TAKEN UP THE MANTLE OF THAT IDEALISTIC IDIOT, CHARLES XAVIER! DEAR GOD--YOU'VE EVEN TAKEN HIS NAME!

DID HE BRAINWASH YOU? WARP YOUR MIND WITH HIS TELEPATHIC POISONS? WELL, WHATEVER HE'S DONE--

--IT'S TIME TO UNDO IT! TIME TO BURY THAT FRAUD "MICHAEL XAVIER"--

ARRRRR--

RAKKKKKK

--AND RESURRECT *MAGNETO--LORD OF THE EVIL MUTANTS!*

Reality collapses--and then re-forms.

We find ourselves standing in a *cavern:* cold, forbidding. And yet disturbingly *familiar.*

MY MIND! WE'RE IN THE RECESSES--OF MY *OWN MIND!* BUT HOW DID YOU--?

I *TOLD* YOU--

--WE'RE CONNECTED. WE'VE *BEEN* CONNECTED SINCE THAT FATEFUL DAY IN SANTO MARCO.

AND WITH THE AID OF YOUR MACHINES, I'VE *MANIFESTED* THAT CONNECTION. *CONCRETIZED* THE UNIVERSE WITHIN YOUR PSYCHE.

NOW COME--

--THERE'S *WORK* TO BE DONE.

An odor, like mold and rot, overwhelms me. Anxiety ripples through my chest, down my spine.

I've faced *unimaginable terrors* in my life...

WELCOME, *MAX EISENHARDT--*

...but I don't think I can face...

...what awaits me *here.*

--TO *HELL.*

I breathe in suffering, breathe out despair. Gaze upon the haunted, hollow faces of people I knew so long ago. Yes, we are *indeed* in Hell...

...For this is *Auschwitz.*

Or some *distorted vision* of it.

WHY HAVE YOU BROUGHT ME HERE?

BROUGHT YOU? DON'T YOU UNDERSTAND? *YOU* BROUGHT *ME!*

NO MATTER HOW YOU TRY TO REPRESS IT, DENY IT, AUSCHWITZ IS *ALWAYS* WITH YOU! IT MADE YOU *WHAT YOU ARE!*

GAVE YOU THE GIFT OF YOUR RIGHTEOUS *HATE!* YOUR SACRED *ANGER!*

CAN YOU *BLAME* ME FOR REPRESSING IT? FOR WANTING TO *BURY* THIS HELLSCAPE FOREVER?

PERHAPS WE *CAN.*

FOR IF YOU DENY THE *DEATH CAMP--*

--YOU DENY *US.*

PAPA! MAMA! RUTH!

I WOULD *NEVER* DENY YOU! NEVER *FORGET* YOU! WE'RE--

I watch, horrified, as their bodies crumble, dissolve into ash--swept away on a bitter wind.

And I ask myself questions I've asked so many times before: Why did *they die?*

And why did *I live?*

YOU WERE SAVED FOR A *REASON.*

LOOK AT THIS PLACE! THIS...THIS *NIGHTMARE!*

THERE'S *NO REASON* IN A WORLD THAT CREATES SUCH A THING!

NO REASON! NO MEANING! NO *GOD!*

YOU ARE THE MEANING! *YOU* ARE THE GOD!

AND YOU WERE SAVED TO ENSURE THAT THE WORLD *DOESN'T FORGET!* THAT THIS KIND OF EVIL *NEVER* RISES AGAIN!

BUT YOU'VE LOST YOUR *FOCUS!* ABANDONED YOUR TRUE *CAUSE!* YOUR TRUE *SELF!* AND IT'S TIME NOW--

--TO *RECLAIM* IT.

The thing in the cage growls, hisses--then lets fly a *terrible howl* of loathing and anguish.

It...*he*... locks eyes with me--such ferocity there, such fury--and I want to scream, run.

But how can I run...

...From myself?

NO! THIS MONSTER ISN'T ME! THIS WAS AN ACT! A... A PERFORMANCE!

I GAVE HUMANITY THE MUTANT MANIAC--THE RAGING, SOULLESS VILLAIN--THEY EXPECTED! DEMANDED!

I KNEW CHARLES WOULD RISE UP TO STOP ME--

--AND I PRAYED HIS ACTIONS WOULD PROVE TO THE HUMAN RACE THAT MUTANTS WEREN'T TO BE FEARED-- BUT ADMIRED AND ACCEPTED!

I PLAYED THE ROLE THAT WAS NECESSARY FOR THE X-MEN TO SUCCEED! FOR MUTANTKIND TO SURVIVE--

--IN A HOSTILE WORLD!

A WISE MAN ONCE SAID, "WE ARE WHAT WE PRETEND TO BE."

PERHAPS IT BEGAN AS A ROLE. PERHAPS YOU DID WISH FOR XAVIER TO SUCCEED. BUT IN YOUR HEART--

--YOU KNEW HE WOULDN'T. IN YOUR HEART--

--YOU UNDERSTOOD THAT HUMANITY'S SAVAGERY...ITS PREJUDICE AND HATE--

--WOULD NEVER GO AWAY. AND THAT THE MONSTER'S PATH--

--IS THE ONLY PATH.

SHE'S WRONG.

YES, THE SUFFERING YOU KNEW...*WE KNEW*... IN THIS AWFUL PLACE IS WHAT'S *DRIVEN* YOU ALL THESE YEARS.

That voice. *Always there...*

BUT NOT TO HATE. NOT TO DESTROY. TO *UNIFY.*

TO BRING TWO WORLDS TOGETHER IN *PEACE.*

...like a distant radio signal...

...echoing through my mind.

THAT'S THE *ONLY WAY* WE CAN STOP THIS MADNESS FROM *EVER HAPPENING AGAIN.*

YOU'RE JUST A *CHILD!* YOU DON'T KNOW *ANYTHING!*

HE'S *NOT* A CHILD, THOUGH-- IS HE...?

HE'S *YOU.* THE PART OF YOU THAT NEVER *LOST HOPE--*

--EVEN WHEN YOU LOST *EVERYTHING ELSE.*

Charles...?

THE BOY IS A *PHANTOM!* A *LIE!* AND SO ARE *YOU!*

THEN WHY ARE THEY *HERE?*

AND WHY AM *I?*

PERHAPS TO REMIND YOU THAT THE THING IN THE *CAGE* IS THE LIE--

--AND THAT *YOU,* MY HUSBAND, ARE A GREAT LIGHT-- *SHINING* IN THE DARKNESS.

A LIGHT, *MAGDA? NO.*

YOU AND LITTLE *ANYA* BOTH *DIED* BECAUSE OF ME.

AND I'VE CARRIED THAT BURDEN OF GRIEF AND SHAME FOR *ALL THESE YEARS.*

WE DIED BECAUSE PEOPLE FEAR WHAT THEY DON'T *UNDERSTAND.* LEAD THEM *OUT* OF FEAR AND IGNORANCE, MY LOVE.

SHOW THEM THE WAY.

I KNOW YOU, OLD FRIEND, PERHAPS BETTER THAN YOU KNOW ***YOURSELF***--

--SO BELIEVE ME WHEN I SAY IT ***DOESN'T MATTER*** IF THE "EVIL MUTANT" WAS A ROLE YOU PLAYED OR ***NOT.***

ALL THAT MATTERS IS THE ***CHOICE*** YOU MAKE ***HERE AND NOW.*** SO I IMPLORE YOU--

--CHOOSE ***PEACE.*** CHOOSE ***UNITY.***

Even as Charles' words lift me up, I feel ***Irae*** in my mind-- dragging me down. Feel the monster straining against the bars of his cage. Against the walls of my psyche.

CHOOSE ***HOPE.***

Peace? Unity? Hope? These things run, like sand, through my fingers. But the monster's wrath, ***magnified*** by Irae's mutant abilities, grows in me...***fills*** my every cell...until rage is all I ***know.*** All I ***see.***

ALL I AM!

KA-KROOOOOMM

I reduce these ghosts to scattered atoms. What were they, really, but aspects of myself that I no longer *need?*

But the *monster?* He lives and breathes and seethes beneath my skin. And as we leave the mindscape and step back into reality...

...I welcome him.

YOU'RE RIGHT, IRAE! *YOU'RE RIGHT!* I AM...I HAVE *ALWAYS* BEEN--

MAGNETO
ENEMY OF HUMANITY! SAVIOR OF MUTANTKIND!

AND I *WILL NEVER* BE LOCKED IN A CAGE *AGAIN!*

MY QUEEN!

WHAT IS IT, *CRAWLER?*

AN *INTRUDER*-- SIXTY MILES OUT. COMING IN FAST.

AH--THE CHILDREN HAVE COME.

NO DOUBT TO RESCUE ME FROM YOUR CLUTCHES.

LET'S GIVE THEM A... *WARM* WELCOME.

For a moment, I feel pity for them. Compassion. They were, after all, my students.

But they were never *really* mine. They were his: *Xavier's.* Dedicated to his delusional cause.

And for *that* sin alone...

...HALFWAY ACROSS THE WORLD IN TWENTY MINUTES. *NOT BAD,* 'LOCK.

NOT *GOOD,* EITHER.

DON'T TELL ME YOU'RE *STILL* THINKIN' MAGNETO'S LED US INTO SOME KIND OF TRAP?

BOBBY CAN'T *HELP* HIMSELF, *MON AMI.* IT'S IN HIS *NATURE.* GLASS HALF EMPTY AND ALL TH--

ALARM, ALARM!

SELFSENSORS IDENT *ENERGY WAVE* OF UNKNOWN ORIGIN ERUPTING FROM BELOW!

EVADE! EVADE! EVA--

SHRAKK

...they deserve to *die.*

Next--
TURNING POINT!

MAGNETO #4

NEXT ISSUE

KAMIC RIDER

MARIKA